

Weekly Current Affairs PDF March 07 to March 13, 2021

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INTERNATIONAL

World's Most Powerful Supercomputer Fugaku is ready for use

- The Japanese scientific research institute called RIKEN and Fujitsu started developing the "Fugaku" six years ago. It is the world's most powerful supercomputers. Fugaku has been named after an alternative name for Mount Fuji. Now, this supercomputer is fully ready and developed in Japan and is now available for research use. This supercomputer has been developed with the aim of making the device core of the computing infrastructure of Japan.

Important points:

- Then the supercomputer was tested for the particular projects in order to combat the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020.
- Now the Fugaku is fully open and available for shared use. The Research Organization for the Information Science and Technology (RIST) of Japan has selected some 74 projects which will use this supercomputer in the financial year 2021.
- RIST has also proposed for the development of the new projects in several categories and has invited the researchers who are interested to apply for the same.

NATIONAL

Karnataka CM unveils 'Xcelerator Bengaluru'

- Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Wednesday unveiled 'Xcelerator Bengaluru' to assist ladies entrepreneurs develop throughout the state.
- "The 'Xcelerator Bengaluru' initiative will assist 50,000 ladies entrepreneurs throughout the state to develop their enterprise over the following 3 years," mentioned Yediyurappa on the event.
- World Alliance for Mass Entrepreneurship (GAME), Ubuntu Consortium and the Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Business (FKCCI) have collectively developed the Xcelerator Bengaluru to concentrate on ladies entrepreneurship as the expansion driver within the southern state.

Union Cabinet approves Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Nidhi

- The Union Cabinet has approved the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Nidhi (PMSSN), as a single non-lapsable reserve fund. This has been approved for the share of Health from proceeds of Health and Education Cess which is levied under the Section 136-b of Finance Act, 2007.
- This is a non-lapsable reserve fund for the Health in the Public Account. This fund will comprise of the proceeds from the share of health in the Health and Education Cess. This revenue in the fund will be used for the flagship schemes of the Health Ministry including the National Health Mission, Ayushman Bharat – Health and Wellness Centres, Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana and for the emergency & disaster preparedness and responses in cases of health emergencies.

Cabinet Approves Amendments in Insurance Act 1938

- The Union Cabinet has given its nod for amendments in the Insurance Act, paving way for 74 per cent foreign direct investment in the sector. Currently, the permissible FDI limit in life and general insurance stands at 49 per cent with ownership and management control with Indian. According to sources, the Cabinet in its meeting has approval for amendments in the Insurance Act, 1938. It was in 2015 when the government hiked the FDI cap in the insurance sector from 26 per cent to 49 per cent.
- The majority of directors on the board and key management persons would be resident Indians, with at least 50 per cent of directors being independent directors, and a specified percentage of profits being retained as a general reserve.
- An increase in FDI will help improve life insurance penetration in the country. Life insurance premium as a percentage of GDP is 3.6 per cent in the country, way below the global average of 7.13 per cent, and in the case of general insurance, it is even worse at 0.94 per cent of GDP, as against the world average of 2.88 per cent.
- The government has earlier allowed 100 per cent foreign direct investment in insurance intermediaries.

J&K celebrates festival of Shivratri 'Herath'

- In the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, the festival of Shivratri 'Herath' is being celebrated across Jammu and Kashmir. Festival Mahashivratri locally known as Herath in Kashmir is being celebrated across J&K by Kashmiri Pandit Community with religious fervour by offering "Watak Nath Pooja".
- The festival assumes colossal importance among the Kashmiri Pandit Community who celebrate it to mark the wedding of "Lord Shiva with Goddess Parvati". This festival symbolizes the values of devotion and harmony, which are the hallmarks of the glorious tradition & cultural ethos of Jammu and Kashmir.

SPORTS

Mithali Raj Becomes First Indian Woman Cricketer To Score 10,000 International Runs

1. Mithali Raj on Friday became the first Indian woman to score 10,000 runs in international cricket across all formats. Mithali reached the milestone in the ongoing third One-day International (ODI) against South Africa in Lucknow. The Indian ODI skipper scored 36 runs before being dismissed by Anne Bosch. Mithali has scored 6974 runs in ODIs while in the T20Is, she has 2,364 runs to her name. The 38-year-old right-handed batter has also scored 663 runs from 10 Test matches.
2. Mithali is now the second international cricketer to score 10,000 runs across formats. England's Charlotte Edwards is the only other woman cricketer who has achieved this feat.

IMPORTANT DAYS

2021 Dandi March to mark 75 years of Independence

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has flagged off the 91st anniversary of Dandi March on March 12

in Ahmedabad to celebrate the 75th anniversary of India's Independence. The Salt March, which took place from March to April 1930, was an act of civil disobedience led by Mahatma Gandhi to protest the British rule in the country. The event is kicked off from Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram and this event is also the part of the State government's programme to mark "Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav."

- The Dandi March or Salt March as part of Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent protest against the British monopoly on the production of salt. Led by Gandhi, 78 people started the 24-day march on March 12 and reached Dandi on April 5, 1930. After making salt at Dandi, Gandhi headed to Dharasana Salt Works, 40 km south, but was arrested on May 5.

World Kidney Day observed globally on 11th March 2021

- World Kidney Day is observed globally on the second Thursday of March every year. This year World Kidney Day is observed on 11th March 2021. The theme of the 2021 World Kidney day is "Living Well with Kidney Disease". World Kidney Day is a global campaign aimed at raising awareness of the importance of our kidneys. World Kidney Day aims to raise awareness of the importance of our kidneys to our overall health and to reduce the frequency and impact of kidney disease and its associated health problems worldwide.
- Raise awareness about our "amazing kidneys" Highlight that diabetes and high blood pressure are key risk factors for Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD).
- Encourage systematic screening of all patients with diabetes and hypertension for CKD.
- Encourage preventive behaviours.
- Educate all medical professionals about their key role in detecting and reducing the risk of CKD, particularly in high-risk populations.
- Stress the important role of local and national health authorities in controlling the CKD epidemic. On World Kidney Day all governments are encouraged to take action and invest in further kidney screening.
- Encourage Transplantation as a best-outcome option for kidney failure, and the act of organ donation as a life-saving initiative.

SUMMITS AND MOU'S

IBM signs MoU with U'khand Government to introduce STEM for Girls

- IBM has announced a collaboration with Samagra Sikhsha Uttarakhand, the Government of Uttarakhand's education mission, to introduce the 'IBM STEM for Girls' program in 130 secondary and higher secondary schools across five districts in the state. The collaboration is part of a three-year program between IBM and Uttarakhand State Government with the American India Foundation as the implementation partner to increase the participation of girls and women in STEM careers.
- The program will advance the skills and careers of close to 25,600 students in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields.
- The demand for a highly qualified workforce in India is quickly increasing with the acceleration of emerging technologies.
- The 'IBM STEM for Girls' program features a comprehensive approach that builds technical

capabilities as well as life and self-actualization skills.

- 'STEM for Girls' is an IBM Corporate Social Responsibility initiative primarily aimed at improving education-to-work and career pathways for girls who are studying in Government schools.
- The program includes imparting training in digital literacy, coding and technology skills, 21st-century skills, and career development to enable girls' empowerment and increase their interest in STEM education and careers.

BANKING AND ECONOMY

Tata Motors launches 'Wheels of Love' programme to support new parents

- Tata Motors has announced the launch of 'Wheels of Love', a Programme that supports new parents in their exciting journey both as a parent and also as a valued employee while promoting a progressive culture of care, inclusion and sensitization within the organization across levels.
- Also presented in the form of a curated book, 'Wheels of Love' puts forth various tenets to enable new and expectant parents to successfully manage the need to focus on their growing family while also fulfilling their career goals, according to a statement.

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INTERNATIONAL

Deepika Padukone joins WEF list of Young Global Leader

- Actor Deepika Padukone has joined the list of the Young Global Leaders (YGLs) compiled by the World Economic Forum. The list also includes several Indian citizens and India-origin persons. They join a group of Nobel Prize recipients, Pulitzer winners, heads of state and chief executive officers committed to improving the state of the world.
- Announcing its 2021 class of YGLs, the WEF said these are the world's most promising 112 tomorrow's leaders under the age of 40 and are involved in activities ranging from advocating public healthcare to campaigning for inclusivity in medical research. The Forum of Young Global Leaders was founded in 2005 by Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairman of the WEF, to create a world where leaders take responsibility for a sustainable future while meeting increasingly complex and interrelated challenges.

NATIONAL

India-Uzbekistan joint military exercise DUSTLIK II commences in Ranikhet

- The India – Uzbekistan joint military exercise DUSTLIK II has commenced in Foreign Training Node Chaubatia, Ranikhet in Uttarakhand. This is the Second Edition of the annual bilateral joint exercise of both armies. It will continue till the 19th of this month. The first edition of the exercise was held in Uzbekistan in November 2019. 45 Soldiers each from Uzbekistan and the Indian Army are participating in the exercise.
- Both contingents will be sharing their expertise and skills in the field of counter-terrorist operations in mountainous or rural or urban scenarios under UN mandate. The validation exercise will be a testbed for the soldiers of both armies as they would be undergoing the

challenges of actual operations in such scenarios. The joint exercise will definitely provide impetus to the ever-growing military and diplomatic ties between the two nations and also reflects the strong resolve of both nations to counter-terrorism.

ISRO Develops Joint Earth Observation Satellite Mission Radar With NASA

- ISRO has completed the development of a Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) capable of producing extremely high-resolution images for a joint earth observation satellite mission with the US space agency NASA. NASA-ISRO SAR (NISAR) is a joint collaboration for a dual-frequency L and S-band SAR for earth observation.
- NISAR will be the first satellite mission to use two different radar frequencies (L-band and S-band) to measure changes in our planet's surface less than a centimetre across.
- The mission is targeted to launch in early 2022 from ISRO's Sriharikota spaceport in Andhra Pradesh's Nellore district, about 100 km north of Chennai.
- NASA is providing the mission's L-band SAR, a high-rate communication subsystem for science data, GPS receivers, a solid-state recorder and payload data subsystem.
- ISRO is providing the spacecraft bus, the S-band radar, the launch vehicle and associated launch services for the mission, whose goal is to make global measurements of the causes and consequences of land surface changes using advanced radar imaging.

OBITUARY

Ivory Coast Prime Minister Hamed Bakayoko passes away

- The incumbent Prime Minister of Ivory Coast, Hamed Bakayoko, has passed away due to cancer. He was named prime minister in July 2020 following the sudden death of his predecessor, Amadou Gon Coulibaly. President of Ivory Coast, Alassane Ouattara, has named Patrick Achi as interim prime minister in place of Bakayoko.
- Patrick Achi was serving as the chief of defence staff of the country.

Veteran Marathi Actor Shrikant Moghe Passes Away

- The Marathi stage and film actor, Shrikant Moghe has passed away. He was popular for his work in both Marathi and Hindi languages. He was born at Kirloskarwadi in the Sangli district of Maharashtra.
- He is known for his performances in Marathi films like Madhuchandra, Sinhaasan, Gammat Jammatt and Umbaratha, and plays such as Varyavarchu Varaat and Tuze Aahe Tujapashi.

APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS

Union Minister Anurag Thakur promoted as Captain in Territorial Army

- Union Minister Anurag Thakur has become the first serving MP to be appointed as Captain in the Territorial Army. Thakur has been promoted to the rank of Captain at 124 Infantry Battalion Territorial Army (Sikh).
- The four-time BJP MP from Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur was commissioned into the Territorial Army as a Lieutenant by then Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Dalbir S Suhag TA in July 2016.

Gol appoints Dr. GP Samanta as new Chief Statistician of India

- The Central Government has appointed Dr G P Samanta as the new Chief Statistician of India (CSI) for a period of two years. He is India's fourth CSI. He will replace Kshatrapati Shivaji who was holding an additional charge of the post since September 2020.
- Currently, Dr Samanta was serving as an adviser in the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Department Of Statistics and Information Management. Dr Samanta will also serve as the Secretary of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).

IMPORTANT DAYS

Central Industrial Security Forces Celebrates its 52nd Raising Day

- The Central Industrial Security Forces (CISF) – Raising Day (CRD) is observed on March 10 in India every year. In 2021, the nation is celebrating the 52nd Raising Day of CISF. The basic objective of the CISF is Better "protection and security" of industrial undertakings in both government and private sectors in the country.
- CISF was set up under an Act of the Parliament of India on 10 March 1969, for the better protection and security of industrial undertakings in the country.
- Eventually, it was made an armed force of the Republic of India by another Act of Parliament passed on 15 June 1983.
- CISF is one of six paramilitary forces in India and functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs with its headquarters in New Delhi.
- The CISF has 12 reserve battalions and 8 training institutes.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

President Ram Nath Kovind presents Baton of Honor to Kiran Bedi

- President Ram Nath Kovind has presented a baton of honour and a letter of appreciation to former Puducherry lieutenant governor Kiran Bedi at Rashtrapati Bhavan. The former Puducherry lieutenant governor received a Baton of Honor decorated with the emblem of the Indian Republic and the appreciation letter recognizing her service in the Union Territory of Puducherry.
- Kiran Bedi was removed as the Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry on February 16 by the President of India and Tamilisai Soundararajan took additional charge as the Lieutenant Governor on February 18.

Amitabh Bachchan to be honoured with 2021 FIAF Award

- Megastar Amitabh Bachchan will be honoured with an award by the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF). The veteran actor will be the first Indian cinema personality to be bestowed with the FIAF Award for his dedication and contribution to the preservation of the world's film heritage.
- Amitabh Bachchan was nominated for the award by the FIAF affiliate Film Heritage Foundation which is a not-for-profit organisation founded by Shivendra Singh Dungarpur a filmmaker & archivist. This foundation is dedicated to preserve, restore, document, exhibit and study the film heritage of India.

- The FIAF is a worldwide organisation, comprising film archives and museums from across the world. Hollywood filmmakers and previous recipients of the FIAF Award — Martin Scorsese and Christopher Nolan — will present the award to Bachchan during a virtual showcase scheduled to take place on March 19.

Niger's President Mahamadou Issoufou wins Africa's top prize

- Mahamadou Issoufou, the incumbent President of Niger has won the "2020 Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership", the world's largest leadership prize, worth \$5 million. He is the sixth winner of the Ibrahim Prize since it was introduced in 2006, by Sudanese billionaire Mo Ibrahim's foundation to promote good governance in the world's poorest continent.
- The 69-year-old Issoufou is stepping down as president of Niger in April 2021, after serving two terms in office. He first took office in 2011 and was then re-elected in 2016.

BANKING AND ECONOMY

RBI removes PCA restrictions on IDBI Bank

- The Reserve Bank of India has removed IDBI Bank from its enhanced regulatory supervision or Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework. It was noted that as per published results for the quarter ending December 31, 2020, the bank is not in breach of the PCA parameters on regulatory capital, net NPA and leverage ratio.
- The bank has also provided a written commitment that it would comply with the norms of minimum regulatory capital, net NPA and leverage ratio on an ongoing basis and has apprised the RBI of the structural and systemic improvements that it has put in place which would help the bank in continuing to meet these commitments.
- The central bank had placed IDBI Bank under the PCA framework in May 2017 after it had breached the thresholds for capital adequacy, asset quality, return on assets and the leverage ratio
- The bank had reported a standalone net profit of Rs 378 crore for the December quarter of 2020-21 compared to a standalone net loss of Rs 5,763 crore in the year-ago quarter.

Axis Bank launches "Wear N Pay" contactless payment wearable devices

- Axis Bank has launched a range of wearable contactless payment devices under the brand Wear 'N' Pay. These devices come in different forms of wearables like a band, key chain and watch loop and are available starting at Rs 750.
- The wearables are directly linked to the bank account of an Axis Bank customer and function like a regular debit card. It allows purchases at any merchant store which accepts contactless transactions.

MeitY released the list of "Digital Payment Scorecard"

- The Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) has released the list of "Digital Payment Scorecard". In the list, the State Bank of India (SBI) has topped for the third consecutive months. The digital payment scorecard tracks the performance of the Commercial Banks on several digital parameters. SBI maintained the top remitter bank by recording the

highest UPI transaction volume which accounted for nearly Rupees 640 million.

- SBI has also emerged as the largest issuer of debit cards. It issued over 290 million debit cards with a 30% market share with respect to card spends and 29% share with respect to transaction volume. Bank has also made steady progress with respect to increasing payment acceptance infrastructure.

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INTERNATIONAL

Switzerland votes to ban full face coverings in public places

- Switzerland has voted in favour of a proposal banning full facial coverings including the burqa and niqab in almost all public places. In the public referendum, around 51.21 per cent of voters voted in support of the controversial proposal. The vote means that full facial covering will be banned in all publicly accessible places in Switzerland including on the streets, public transport, in public offices such as restaurants, shops and in the countryside.
- The full-face covering will be allowed in places of worship and other sacred sites. It will also be allowed for health and safety reasons and in situations where it is a local custom such as carnivals.
- According to the proposal by the Swiss Federal Government, there will be no additional exceptions such as for tourists.
- France was the first European nation to ban burqas and niqabs in public places in 2011. The European Court of Human Rights had upheld the ban in 2014.

Economic Freedom Index 2021 announced

- The Heritage Foundation, a US Conservative think-tank, recently launched the “Economic Freedom Index”. The index was prepared by covering 184 countries this time for the period of July 2019 to June 2020. This is the first time the index has been published since the COVID-19 pandemic overturned lives as well as global economies and the scoring reflects a small extent how governments have responded to the health crisis.
- In the index, Singapore has topped the global ranking for the second consecutive year. In the 2021 Index, India came in around the middle of the pack among Asia-Pacific countries ranking 26th out of 40 countries, scoring 56.5 points. Globally, the Foundation rates India’s economy as the 121st freest. Although its overall score is unchanged, improvements were made in business freedom. This was offset by declines in judicial effectiveness and other scores.

Index

- Rank 1: Singapore
- Rank 2: New Zealand
- Rank 3: Australia
- Rank 4: Switzerland
- Rank 5: Ireland
- The biggest news generated from the “2021 Index of Economic Freedom” was however not the rankings or how COVID-19 impacted the scores but that The Heritage Foundation

decided to exclude Hong Kong from its rankings for the first time ever.

- The Heritage Foundation said that the reason for leaving Hong Kong out is that the Special Administrative Region and its economic policies have now come under the direct control of Beijing.

NATIONAL

PM Narendra Modi inaugurates 'Maitri Setu' between India and Bangladesh

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has inaugurated the 'Maitri Setu' bridge between India and Bangladesh through a video conference, to strengthen the connectivity between both countries and especially with the north-eastern region of India. Maitri bridge will also make Tripura the 'Gateway of North East' with access to Chittagong Port of Bangladesh, which is just 80 km from the Sabroom.
- The Maitri Setu bridge has been built on the Feni river, which lies between the Indian boundary in Tripura and Bangladesh.
- The 1.9 Kilometres long bridge will connect Sabroom in India with Ramgarh in Bangladesh.
- The bridge has been constructed by the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited at a project cost of around Rs. 133 Crore.

Jammu and Kashmir launches Super-75 Scholarship Scheme

- The Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has launched "Super-75" scholarship schemes for meritorious girls, on the occasion of International Women's Day 2021. The basic aim of this scholarship scheme is to facilitate the education and entrepreneurship of women.
- The super-75 scholarship scheme will support the education of meritorious girls from poor families, so that they can excel in streams like medicine, engineering, ITI (Industrial training institutes) and humanity and contribute to nation-building.
- Apart from this, Lt Governor Sinha also announced a new scheme named 'Tejaswini'. This scheme has been launched under 'Mission Youth-J&K'.
- Under Tejaswini, financial assistance of Rs 5 lakhs will be provided to the girls between the age group of 18 to 35 years to start their business.

SPORTS

Koneru Humpy is BBC's Indian sportswoman of the year

- World rapid chess champion Koneru Humpy has won the BBC Indian Sportswoman-of-the-Year award. BBC director-general Tim Davie, hosting the virtual awards ceremony. The Lifetime Achievement award went to veteran athlete Anju Bobby George.
- English cricket star Ben Stokes announced the 19-year-old Indian Shooter, Manu Bhaker as the winner of the Emerging Player-of-the-Year award category. Bhaker, won two golds at the ISSF World Cup in 2018, followed by gold at the Youth Olympics and a Commonwealth Games gold with a record to boot.

Ashwin, Beaumont Win ICC Player of Month Awards for February

- India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin was awarded the ICC Player of the Month award for

February, the International Cricket Council (ICC). Ashwin beat England captain Joe Root and West Indies' Kyle Mayers to the award. Ashwin played a crucial role with bat and ball as India raced to a 2-1 lead over England in their four-match Test series in February before eventually winning the series 3-1 in March. He was the highest wicket-taker in the series with 32 scalps and scored a century in the second Test in Chennai.

- Meanwhile, England opener Tammy Beaumont won the ICC Women's Player of the Month for February. Beaumont was the overwhelming winner after she played three ODIs in February against New Zealand where she passed fifty in each of these, totalling 231 runs. She beat her teammate Natalie Sciver and New Zealand's Brooke Halliday to the award.

India-New Zealand World Test Championship final in Southampton

- India will play their inaugural World Test Championship final against New Zealand at Southampton's Ageas Bowl Stadium, England from June 18-22.
- Initially, the final was supposed to be held at the Lord's but Southampton, with a five-star facility inside the stadium, will make it easier for both the ICC and the England and Wales Cricket Board to create a bio-bubble for the two teams.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Indian Navy's 'silent killer' INS Karanj commissioned

- The Indian Navy got its third Scorpene submarine, commissioned as INS Karanj, of Project P-75 in Mumbai. With the delivery of Karanj, India further cemented its position as a submarine-building nation. Mazagon Dock Ltd (MDL), one of India's leading shipyards with the capacity and the capability to meet the requirements and aspirations of the Indian Navy. Before Karanj, INS Kalvari and INS Khanderi have been commissioned in the Indian Navy in 2017 and 2019, respectively.
- Karanj is seen as a small submarine having a length of 60 metres.
- It's equipped with the best sensors in the world.
- Weapon package includes sufficient wire-guided torpedoes and sub-surface to surface missiles to neutralise a large enemy fleet. For self-defence, it has a state-of-the-art torpedo-decoy system.
- It is fitted with an integrated platform management system to provide centralised propulsion and machinery control. The powerful diesel engines can quickly charge batteries for a stealthy mission profile.
- It is fitted with a permanent magnet synchronous motor, making it one of the quietest submarines in the world.
- Its modular construction enables up-gradation to air-independent propulsion in future.

APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS

Tirath Singh Rawat becomes new Chief Minister of U'khand

- The Bharatiya Janata Party's member of Parliament from Pauri Garhwal, Tirath Singh Rawat, will be the next chief minister of Uttarakhand. This was announced by outgoing chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat, who resigned. Tirath Singh Rawat will be sworn in as the new chief

minister of Uttarakhand.

- Tirath Singh Rawat was the chief of the party in Uttarakhand in 2013-15 and also an MLA from the state in the past. His name was picked over prominent candidates including Union Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank and Uttarakhand Minister Dhan Singh Rawat.

BANKING AND ECONOMY

Delhi govt presents Rs 69000 Cr 'Deshbhakti' Budget

- The Delhi government presented a Rs 69,000-crore budget themed on 'patriotism' or 'Deshbhakti' for the financial year 2021-22. The budget was presented by the Deputy Chief Minister of Delhi, Manish Sisodia. While presenting the budget, he announced that the government has decided to celebrate the 75th Independence Day of India. The Delhi government will hold programmes from March 12, 2021, which will last for 75 weeks.
- The government has proposed to allocate Rupees 45 crores in order to install high masts so as to hoist the national flag at 500 places in Delhi.
- An outlay of Rs 50 crores made under 'Aam Aadmi Nishulk COVID Vaccine Yojana. It announced free Covid-19 vaccination to all in its hospitals in the coming phases of the ongoing inoculation drive.
- The budget highlights that the government seeks to increase the per capita income of Delhi in order to reach the level of Singapore by the year 2047.
- The government will also allocate rupees 10 crores for the programmes on Bhagat Singh's life during the Deshbhakti celebrations.
- This year's budget accounts for the budget outlay of more than 6.1 per cent than the budget presented for financial 2020-21.

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INTERNATIONAL

Bangladesh to commemorate 50th anniversary of 1971 Liberation war

- In the 50th year of Indian victory over Pakistan in the 1971 Liberation war, Indian Naval Ships arrived in the port town of Mongla for a three-day visit to Bangladesh. The Indian Naval Ships is on a three-day visit between March 8 to 10. This is the first time ever that any Indian Naval Ship is visiting the port of Mongla in Bangladesh.
- The basic aim of this visit is to pay homage to the Bangladeshi and Indian combatants and citizens who laid down their lives during the Liberation War of 1971 against Pakistan. The ships will take part in the ongoing Swarnim Vijay Varsh celebrations to commemorate 50 years of the Liberation War of 1971 and reiterating the historic Indo-Bangladeshi friendship.

UNEP Food Waste Index Report 2021

- The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and WRAP released the Food Waste Index Report 2021 and highlights that food wastes by different countries in 2019. As per the report, Over 931 million tonnes of food were wasted globally in 2019.
- In India, the household food waste estimate is 50 kg per capita per year, or 68,760,163 tonnes a

year.

- The household food waste estimate in the US is 59 kg per capita per year, or 19,359,951 tonnes a year.
- China these estimates are 64 kg per capita per year or 91,646,213 tonnes a year.

NATIONAL

President of India Inaugurates conservation works at Singorgarh Fort in MP

- The President of India, Ram Nath Kovind has laid the foundation stone for the conservation works of Singorgarh Fort in Singrampur village of Damoh district, Madhya Pradesh. He also inaugurated the newly carved Jabalpur Circle of Archaeological Survey of India.
- Apart from this, President Kovind addressed the State Level Tribal Conference 'Janjatiya Sammelan' at Singrampur village in Damoh. The program was organized jointly by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India and the Tribal Affairs Department of Madhya Pradesh.

SPORTS

PV Sindhu wins silver in BWF Swiss Open Super 300

- India's ace shuttler PV Sindhu has won a silver medal in the BWF Swiss Open Super 300 in the final of the women's singles event held at Basel, Switzerland. The World No. 7 Sindhu lost to World No. 3 and reigning Olympic champion Carolina Marin.

Swiss Open 2021 Winners

- Men's Singles : Viktor Axelsen (Denmark) beat Kunlavut Vitidsarn (Thailand).
- Women's Singles: Carolina Marin (Spain) beat PV Sindhu (India).
- Men's Doubles: Kim Astrup and Anders Skaarup Rasmussen (Denmark) beat Mark Lamsfuss-Marvin Seidel (Germany).
- Mixed Doubles: Thom Gicquel-Delphine Delrue (France) beat Denmark pair, Mathias Christiansen-Alexandra Boje.

India qualify for ICC World Test Championship Final

- Indian Cricket Team have qualified for the inaugural ICC World Test Championship final after beating England in an innings and 25 runs in the fourth and final Test in Ahmedabad on 6th March.
- New Zealand had already qualified for the WTC final with 420 points from 11 Tests with 7 wins and 4 losses. The World Test Championship final will be played at the Lord's Cricket Ground in London from June 18.

Bajrang Punia bags gold in Matteo Pellicon World ranking series

- In wrestling, the World Championship bronze medallist Bajrang Punia won a gold medal at the Matteo Pallicone ranking series held in Rome, Italy. He defeated Mongolia's Tulga Tumur Ochir 2-2 by criteria in the 65kg freestyle event final. It is the second successive gold medal for 27 years Haryana wrestler, who had won the previous gold at this competition in 2020 by beating Jordan Oliver of the USA in the final.
- Apart from this, the ace India woman wrestler Vinesh Phogat won the gold medal in the 53kg

title. The 26-year-old Vinesh beat Canada's Diana Weicker 4-0.

APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS

Uttarakhand CM Trivendra Singh Rawat resigns

- Trivendra Singh Rawat has resigned as the chief minister of Uttarakhand, a year before the hill state is scheduled to go to polls. Rawat, who became the CM after the BJP swept the assembly elections here in early 2017, tendered his resignation after meeting governor Baby Rani Maurya. According to reports, the party is mulling bringing in a deputy chief minister, the frontrunners for the post include State Education Minister Dhan Singh Rawat, MP Ajay Bhatt and Satpal Maharaj.
- The central BJP leadership had recently sent two observers, party vice president Raman Singh and general secretary Dushyant Kumar Gautam, to Uttarakhand to get feedback from the party's core group in the state amid reports of discontent against the chief minister.

NABARD's Chintala takes charge as chairman of APRACA

- NABARD chairman, G R Chintala has assumed charge as the chairman of APRACA (Asia Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association). He has taken over from DPK Gunasekera, who is also the Chief Executive Officer of Bank of Ceylon. Chintala, in his address as APRACA Chairman, appreciated the role of the members of APRACA in promoting the development of rural finance in Asia Pacific.
- APRACA, established in 1977, is an association of institutions involved in agricultural, rural and microfinance policy and development, representing 21 countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

BOOKS AND AUTHORS

A book on Smriti Irani's victory in Amethi released soon

- The English translation of journalist-author Anant Vijay's book "Amethi Sangram: Aitihāsik Jeet Ankahi Dastan" will be released on March 15. The book, titled "Dynasty to Democracy: The Untold Story of Smriti Irani's Triumph", traces Union Minister Irani's journey from her defeat in 2014 to her victory in the Congress stronghold of Amethi, Uttar Pradesh during the 2019 Lok Sabha election. The Hindi book was published in December 2020. The book can also be seen as a study of the RSS's working style, its strategies and exemplary execution that backed Smriti Irani's efforts from 2014 to 2019.
- The 44-year-old BJP leader had defeated the then Congress chief and MP Rahul Gandhi in his family bastion by a margin of 55,120 votes. It was the second time that Irani had contested against Rahul in Amethi. In 2014, Rahul got 4,08,651 votes against Irani's 30,0748 votes.

Frontier Gandhi's autobiography released in English

- The autobiography of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, popularly known as the "Frontier Gandhi", titled "The Frontier Gandhi: My Life and Struggle" is set to be published in English by the publishing house Roli Books. This will be his first autobiography in English. The book was translated into English by Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada, the former Pakistani civil servant and author.

- The earlier account of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's life in English was a collection of his interviews and was not his autobiography. The foreword of the book is written by historian Rajmohan Gandhi, Grandson of Gandhi and the book was originally written in Pashto and published in 1983.

BANKING AND ECONOMY

HDFC Bank launches SmartUp Unnati programme

- HDFC Bank on the occasion of International Women' Day has announced the launch of a dedicated programme named "SmartUp Unnati" for mentoring women entrepreneurs by women leaders at the bank.
- Under the SmartUp Unnati programme, over the next one year, senior women leaders from HDFC Bank will mentor women entrepreneurs in helping them achieve their goals. This programme is available only to exist customers and will initially target more than 3,000 women entrepreneurs associated with the bank's SmartUp programme.

Alliance Insurance launches insurance portal 'SMEInsure'

- Alliance Insurance has launched the insurance portal 'SMEInsure' in order to provide financial security to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), small shop and business owners Alliance. It is a portal to insure 5 crores Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) under the insurance category.
- Notably, the portal will provide insurance services in a phygital formate. physical, through individual personal assistance and digital insurance through the portal. The target of Alliance Insurance is to reach more than 5 crore SMEs in the first year and expect revenue of Rs 10 crore. Approximately 97% of the SMEs in India are not insured.

Important Points

- Its objective is to help SMEs in managing multiple risks through a single platform ranging from buying insurance, renewing cover to filing claims.
- This portal will provide options to choose and compare products from various well-known insurance services including HDFC Ergo, Bajaj Allianz, Iffco Tokio, Tata Aig, Liberty General Insurance, Raheja QBE, Reliance General Insurance, and SBI General.
- SMEs can get their businesses insured for professional indemnity, director and officers, marine, fire and burglary etc.

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NATIONAL

Google Launched "Women Will" Web Platform

- Google has launched a new web platform 'Women Will' on March 8, 2021, on the occasion of "International Women's Day". This platform will provide its support to 1 million rural women in India in order for them to become entrepreneurs with the help of accelerator programmes, business tutorials and mentorship.
- This web portal can be accessed in English and Hindi languages. It will offer guidance to the

aspiring women in villages to turn their interest or a hobby like beauty services, tailoring, home tuition, food processing, etc. into the business.

- It will also be providing guidance to manage and promote the business. The Women Will platform is designed for women aspiring to explore entrepreneurship.
- To begin with, Google will work with 2,000 'Internet Saathis' to help other women with this resource to start their entrepreneurial journey.
- Google also announced a \$500,000 Google.org grant to Nasscom Foundation to train 100,000 women Agri workers in Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh on digital and financial literacy. The Foundation will set up a helpline where the women can get counselling on their entrepreneurship-related queries.

Indian Railways install Mobile Train Radio Communication system

- Indian Railways' Western Railway zone has introduced a mobile train radio communication (MTRC) system to facilitate direct and continuous communication between the train crew and the control centre and station master. Through effective communication, this technologically advanced system will help in averting train accidents. This new communication system has already been deployed in 105 rakes, operating between Churchgate to Virar over Mumbai's suburban segment.
- This system uses the lowest time to connect calls i.e. 300 milliseconds and it is the first time that MTRC is commissioned in India.
- The MTRC acts in a similar way to that of air traffic control (ATC) for aircraft.
- The system will monitor, track and aid in communication between the trains and the control room thereby ensuring smooth movement of rakes, as well as help in preventing adverse events.
- The current conventional VHF-based communication system, named Mobile and CUG, lacks the capability of enabling interaction between the train crew and the controllers. The new system can also provide real-time information on train operation during the monsoon season.
- With a two-year warranty and five years of annual maintenance charges (AMC), the new digital MTRC system has been supplied at a cost of approximately \$820,000.

Rajnath Singh Attends 3-day Combined Commanders' Conference

- Defence minister Rajnath Singh has attended the three-day Combined Commanders' Conference (CCC) along with top defence officials at Kevadia, Gujarat. Theaterisation of armed forces, self-reliance in the defence sector and evolving threats in the region will be the focus. It is a premier brainstorming event of the Military Commanders from the three Services.
- Defense Minister, Rajnath Singh held deliberations on Day 2. In a first, valedictory session on the third and final day chaired by PM Narendra Modi. The last CCC was held in 2018 at the Air Force Station, Jodhpur.
- The combined apex level military leadership of the country is reviewing the security situation and defence preparedness of the Armed Forces, and deliberating pertinent organisational issues for evolving a joint military vision for the future. In a major deviation from the past, the scope of the conference this year has been expanded to make it a multi-layered, interactive, informal and informed event with the added participation of about 30 Officers and soldiers of various

ranks from the three Services.

Delhi govt approves formation of separate board in city

- Delhi government has approved the formation of a separate school board for nearly 2,700 schools in the city. There are around 1,000 Delhi government schools and about 1,700 private schools, most of them affiliated to the CBSE, in the city. The new Board will have a governing body headed by the Education Minister of the Delhi government and an executive body headed by a chief executive officer.
- The DBSE will be aimed at imparting such education that prepares “fiercely patriotic” and self-dependent students who serve the society and the country in a selfless manner. The Board will bring in best international practices and high-end techniques in school education. It will impart education as per the aptitude of the students.

Dr Harsh Vardhan addresses the inaugural session of Techbharat 2021

- Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare, Dr Harsh Vardhan has addressed the inaugural session of TechBharat 2021. Laghu Udyog Bharati and IMS Foundation have organized the 2nd edition of the conclave bringing together stakeholders from the HealthTech & Edutech sector on a virtual platform.
- Techbharat is facilitating interactions & deliberations between thousands of domestic & global participants, including policymakers, government representatives, industry members, investors & start-ups to nurture resourceful partnerships and boost growth in the sectors.
- The Pradhan Mantri Aatmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana, with a massive outlay of over 64 thousand crore rupees over the next six years, will develop capacities of primary, secondary and tertiary care, health care systems.

India's first 'Transgender Community Desk' opens in Telangana

- The Cyberabad Police has launched India's first-ever Transgender Community Desk' at the Gachibowli Police Station in Hyderabad, Telangana. This desk is the first-of-its-kind gender-inclusive community policing initiatives in the country. The desk was formally inaugurated on Saturday by Cyberabad Police chief VC Sajjanar in a ceremony that was attended by over 200 transgender people.
- Earlier in 2014, the Supreme Court recognised the transgender community as a third gender along with male and female and ruled that they have equal privilege over the fundamental rights enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

Transgender Community Desk:

- It is the world's first-ever help desk for the transgender community and it will be managed by a Police Liaison Officer and a member of the transgender community who is designated as a community coordinator.
- It will also be the focal point for all grievance redressal among the transgender community in Cyberabad Commissionerate.

Benefits of the Desk:

- The transgender desk will provide support to file cases in offences related to violence or discrimination against any transgender person.

- Among other services, the desk will also provide counselling, legal aid, life-skills, soft skills training, job placements, and referral linkages to welfare schemes in partnership with the Department of Women & Child Welfare and District Legal Services Authority.
- The Society for Cyberabad Security Council will organise monthly employability training and life-skill training and facilitate access to job opportunities. Prajwala will assist the desk to facilitate safe space for any transgender person who needs an emergency transit stay.

OBITUARY

Former Rajasthan Governor Anshuman Singh Passes Away

- Justice Shri Anshuman Singh, the former Governor of Rajasthan & Gujarat, has passed away.
- Anshuman Singh was a retired Justice who served as the Governor of Rajasthan from January 1999 till 2003. Prior to that, he was appointed as the Governor of Gujarat state in 1998.

Dhyan Chand Awardee Veteran Indian Athlete Ishar Singh Deol passes away

- Dhyan Chand National Sports Award-winning veteran Indian athlete Ishar Singh Deol, has passed away. Punjab-based Deol won the Dhyan Chand National Award in 2009 for his lifelong contribution towards sports.
- He was specialised in the field sports of discus and shot put. He had competed in the first three Asian Games and won a bronze medal in the second Asian Games held in Manila, the Philippines in 1954.

Renowned Kannada poet Lakshminarayana Bhatta passes away

- Noted Kannada poet, critic and translator NS Lakshminarayana Bhatta has passed away. Popularly known as 'NSL' in the Kannada literary world, he was born in 1936 in the Shivamogga district. A was recipient of the Karnataka Sahitya Akademi award and Kannada Rajyotsava Award among others, his popular works include Thaye Ninna madilali.
- Bhatta had translated about 50 famous sonnets of William Shakespeare (Suneeta), the poetry of TS Elliot and works of the noted poet William Butler Yeats (Chinnada Hakki) into Kannada. He had also translated several other prominent English literary works into Kannada. He served as a Professor at Bengaluru University, working in the Kannada Literature department, and is revered for popularizing the works of saint-poet Shishunala Sharif.

IMPORTANT DAYS

PM Modi addresses 'Janaushadhi Diwas' celebrations

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has addressed 'Janaushadhi Diwas' celebrations through video conference. He dedicated to the nation the 7500th Janaushadhi Kendra at NEIGRIHMS, Shillong during the event. He interacts with beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana and also gives awards to stakeholders by recognizing their excellent work. Union Minister for Chemicals & Fertilizers will also be present on the occasion.
- 1st March to 7th March is celebrated as 'Janaushadhi Week' across the nation with the theme of "Jan Aushadhi – Seva Bhi, Rozgar Bhi" for creating awareness about the use of generic medicines. Various functions across the country are organized like health checkup camps, Jan

Aushadhi Paricharcha, Teach Them Young, panel discussions with doctors, etc. this week.

- Janaushadhi Yojana is becoming a big friend of poor and middle-class families. It is becoming the medium of both service and employment. There were not even 100 centres in India six years ago and we hope to achieve the target of 10,000 centres. Poor and middle-class families are saving about ₹3,600 crores every year on expensive medicines.

BANKING AND ECONOMY

Sebi cancels Sahara India Financial Corp's registration as sub-broker

- Markets regulator Sebi has cancelled the certificate of registration of Sahara India Financial Corporation Ltd as a sub-broker citing its failure to fulfil the "fit and proper" criteria. The regulator had appointed a designated authority in 2018 to enquire whether Sahara India Financial violated provisions of Intermediaries Regulations.
- According to the designated authority's report, considering the antecedents of Subrata Roy Sahara and the various judicial pronouncements against him and other group companies of Sahara, it is determined that Sahara India Financial (noticee) is not a "fit and proper person" to continue as a sub-broker in the securities market.
- In the 12-page order passed, Sebi Whole Time Member G Mahalingam has mentioned actions taken against certain Sahara entities as well as about the case involving Sebi and two Sahara group firms: Sahara India Real Estate Corporation Ltd (SIRECL) and Sahara Housing Investment Corporation Ltd (SHICL), regarding funds raised from investors.

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NATIONAL

Two-day Gur Mahotsav underway in Lucknow

- In Uttar Pradesh, a Gur Mahotsav or jaggery festival is underway in Lucknow. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurated the two-day event yesterday. Speaking on the occasion, Mr Yogi said that the state government aims to provide maximum benefit of their products to the farmers and for the purpose, the Mahotsav is being organised.
- The sugar cane farmers in state have been paid one lakh 25 thousand 600 crore rupees for their sugar cane crops, he added.
- At the jaggery festival, farmers are exhibiting and selling different types of jaggery and jaggery products. The aim of this event is to motivate the jaggery producers to make high-quality jaggery and its products and create awareness about health benefits of jaggery.

Gol Sets up 259-Member panel to Commemorate 75 Years of India's Independence

- The Government of India has set up a 259-member high-level national committee, to be headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to commemorate 75 years of India's independence. The committee will provide policy direction and guidelines for the formulation of programmes for the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of Indian Independence, at the national and international levels.
- The celebrations are proposed to be launched 75 weeks prior to August 15, 2022, on March 12,

2021, which is the 91st anniversary of the historic Salt Satyagraha led by Mahatma Gandhi. The celebrations will be held at the national and international level in the form of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'. The high-level committee will hold its first meeting on March 8, 2021.

- The members of the panel include former president Pratibha Patil, Chief Justice of India SA Bobde, NSA Ajit Doval, 28 chief ministers, artistes like Lata Mangeshkar, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, senior BJP leader LK Advani, almost all Union ministers and several governors.
- Opposition leaders like Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, NCP leader Sharad Pawar, TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee and former Uttar Pradesh chief ministers Mulayam Singh Yadav and Mayawati are also part of the committee.

Ramesh Pokhriyal Inaugurates New Delhi World Book Fair 2021

- The Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal has inaugurated the New Delhi World Book Fair 2021-Virtual Edition, through video-conferencing. The program has been organized by the National Book Trust (NBT). The New Delhi World Book Fair 2021 is the 29th edition of the annual event and for the first time, the fair will be held virtually due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.
- The theme of the 2021 New Delhi World Book Fair is 'National Education Policy-2020'. The NEP 2020 was passed by the Union Cabinet last year, which proposes several significant changes in the existing education policy.

SPORTS

Bajrang Punia takes gold and number one rank in Rome, bronze

- Tokyo-bound Indian wrestler Bajrang Punia pulled off a two-pointer in the last 30 seconds of the gold medal bout to defend his title at the Matteo Pellicone Ranking Series event, a result that pushed him back to world number one rank.
- Up against Mongolia's Tulga Tumur Ochir, Bajrang was trailing 0-2 till the final moments of the 65kg final but managed to level the scores, 30 seconds from the whistle.
- Since the last scoring point came from the Indian he was declared the winner on criteria on Sunday night.
- Bajrang seemed to have improved upon his leg defence in the one-year break, forced by the coronavirus pandemic.

OBITUARY

Veteran Marathi actor Shrikant Moghe passes away

- Veteran Marathi stage and film actor Shrikant Moghe passed away at his residence in Pune on Saturday. He was 91. He was suffering from age-related ailments.
- Moghe was born on November 6, 1929, at Kirloskarwadi in Sangli district. He had acted in several hit Marathi plays and films such as 'Sinhasan' (1979).

Muthoot Group Chairman M G George Muthoot passes away

- M G George Muthoot, the Chairman and Whole Time Director of The Muthoot Group, has passed away. He was the mentor and visionary leader who played a pivotal leadership role

through his long career in building one of the most trusted financial powerhouses in the country.

- Mr George became the managing director of Muthoot Group in 1979 and its chairman in 1993. Muthoot Finance Ltd is one the largest gold loan NBFCs in India, headquartered in Kochi, Kerala.

APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS

Naureen Hassan appointed as 1st VP & COO of Federal Reserve Bank

- Indian-origin Naureen Hassan has been appointed as the first Vice President and Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the New York-based Federal Reserve Bank, by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. Hassan, whose parents had immigrated from India, is a 25-year veteran of the financial services industry with expertise in strategy, digital transformation, cybersecurity and regulatory/risk management.
- With this new role, Hassan will become the second-highest-ranking officer of the New York Fed as well as an alternate voting member of the Federal Open Market Committee. Prior to this, she was the Chief Digital Officer for Morgan Stanley Wealth Management (MSWM). She will take over the new role with effect from March 15, 2021.

IMPORTANT DAYS

International Women's Day: 8 March

- International Women's Day is celebrated on the 8th of March every year. This day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality. International Women's Day is a time to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women, who have played an extraordinary role in the history of their countries and communities.
- This year's theme for International Women Day, "Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a C-19 world", celebrates the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the C-19 pandemic. Women stand at the front lines of the C-19 crisis, as health care workers, caregivers, innovators, community organizers and as some of the most exemplary and effective national leaders in combating the pandemic. The crisis has highlighted both the centrality of their contributions and the disproportionate burdens that women carry.
- The United Nations began celebrating International Women's Day in the International Women's Year, 1975. In 1977, the United Nations General Assembly invited member states to proclaim March 8 as the UN Day for women's rights and world peace.

SUMMITS AND MOU'S

Textiles Ministry & Agriculture Ministry sign MoU

- Ministry of Textiles and Ministry of Agriculture on Sunday signed an MoU to amplify sericulture activities in the country in the presence of Textiles Minister Smriti Irani and Minister of State for Agriculture Parshottam Rupala. The MoU will focus on establishing tree based agroforestry models in sericulture and exploring possibilities of activities through Krishi Vigyan Kendras.

- Ms Irani said it will enhance training, boost technology and create sustainable livelihood for silk farmers or rearers. On the eve of International Women's Day today, Ms Irani distributed Buniyaad Reeling Machines to women silk reeler with an aim to eradicate unhygienic and obsolete Thigh Reeling practice.

BANKING AND ECONOMY

EPFO keeps interest rate unchanged at 8.5% for 2020-21

- The board of Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has kept the interest rates on Provident Fund deposits for the financial year 2020-21 at 8.5 per cent. The rate has been kept unchanged, as in 2019-20. The decision was taken by the Central Board of Trustees, at the 228th meeting, under the chairmanship of Labour Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar.
- Last year, in March, EPFO had reduced the interest rate on provident fund deposits to a seven-year low of 8.5 per cent for 2019-20. For the financial year 2018-19, the interest rate was fixed at 8.65 per cent. The EPFO had provided an 8.55 per cent interest rate to its subscribers for 2017-18 and an interest rate was 8.65 per cent for the financial year 2016-17.

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NATIONAL

First-ever White Water Rafting Festival organised in J&K's Doda

- In the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, the first-ever adventure sports event, Chenab White Water Rafting Festival organised by the Doda District Administration in coordination with Bhandarwah Development Authority (BDA) and J&K Adventure group culminated today at Premnagar Shibnote in Doda amid overwhelming response from the people.
- 1,500 people from across the district especially, youth attended the festival on day 2 and over 150 participated in the rafting trip from Premnagar Shibnote to Karara. DDC, Doda Sagar Doifode along with CO 10 Rashtriya Rifles, besides youth from various areas of the district participated in the event on the 2nd day and also took a rafting ride.
- The event also witnessed multifarious activities at the venue for the enjoyment of the locals which includes volleyball matches, kabaddi, free-style wrestling and dance performances.

Digital platform 'Jagrut Tripura' launched by CM to boost e- governance

- The Tripura government has come up with a digital platform 'Jagrut Tripura' to help people get benefits from various schemes of the Centre and the state government. At least 102 schemes of various departments of both governments are available on the platform. The 'Jagrut Tripura' will empower citizens of the northeastern state. The digital platform is one of the many proactive initiatives undertaken by the state government to spur a technology-led innovation ecosystem to make 'Atmanirbhar' (self-reliant) Tripura.
- The project was developed by EasyGov, a Jio Group company, and it will be available to all the residents of Tripura. "With 'Jagrut', we want to empower people to get the benefits they deserve, and the focus is on building a family-centric, progressive model having 'one data one source' and privacy at the core.

India downgraded from 'free' to 'partly free' in democracy report

- India's status as a democracy and free society has been downgraded to "partly free" in the latest annual report on global political rights and liberties by Freedom House, a US government-funded NGO that studies political freedom around the world. The report titled "Freedom in the World 2021 – Democracy under Siege". India's fall "from the upper ranks of free nations could have a particularly damaging impact on global democratic standards".
- India had been rated as "free" in Freedom House's reports for 2018, 2019 and 2020, though its scores on a scale of 100 had declined during this period from 77 to 71. In the latest report, India had a score of 67 out of 100.
- In 1973, Freedom House launched the Freedom in the World report, which assessed the level of freedom in each country and ranked them with a numerical score and declared them as "free", "partly free" or "not free".
- The annual report is perceived as one of the oldest quantitative measures of democracy. The latest report said political rights and civil liberties in India had deteriorated since 2014 because of increased pressure on human rights organisations, rising intimidation of academics and journalists, and a "spate of bigoted attacks, including lynchings, aimed at Muslims".

APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS

Ligia Noronha appointed UN Assistant Secretary-General

- UN chief Antonio Guterres has appointed leading Indian economist Ligia Noronha as Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the New York Office of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Prior to joining the UNEP, Noronha worked at The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) in New Delhi as Executive Director (Research Coordination) and as Director of the Division on Resources, Regulation and Global Security.
- Noronha is an economist with over 30 years of international experience in the field of sustainable development.
- She has worked since 2014 as Director of UNEP's Economy Division based in Nairobi, leading UNEP's work on climate mitigation and energy transitions; on inclusive green economies, sustainable consumption and production, as well as on trade and sustainable finance, and the nexus of environment, pollution and health.

Tarun Bajaj to take additional charge of Revenue Secretary

- Department of economic affairs secretary, Tarun Bajaj has been given the additional charge of revenue secretary. Present revenue secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey retires on February 28. The Centre has decided to not grant an extension to finance secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey who was also holding additional charge of the revenue department in the finance ministry.
- Tarun Bajaj, an old hand at the Finance Ministry, assumed charge as Economic Affairs secretary last May, at a time when India saw the worst growth contraction in history on account of the C-19 pandemic.
- Prior to taking over this post, he was Additional Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office.
- Bajaj, a 1988-batch Haryana-cadre IAS officer, is not new to the functioning of the finance

ministry as this is his third stint in the ministry.

SUMMITS AND MOU'S

Samsung Mastercard ink an Mou's

- Samsung Electronics' System LSI Business, Mastercard, Samsung Card, have signed a memorandum of understanding to develop a biometric card that features a built-in fingerprint scanner to authorize transactions securely at in-store payment terminals.
- Through this strategic collaboration, the companies aim to provide faster and more secure payment experiences. The biometric authentication capability allows safer interactions with reduced physical contact points by eliminating the need to enter a PIN on a keypad. It also adds an extra layer of security to currently available credit cards by verifying the cardholder's identity via a unique fingerprint.
- The biometric cards will adopt a new security chipset from Samsung's System LSI Business that integrates several key discrete chips, streamlining the overall component design and enabling more efficient development. These cards can be used at any Mastercard chip terminal or point of sale (POS) terminal.

BANKING AND ECONOMY

Axis Securities' new platform to make investment in bond

- Axis Securities has announced the launch of 'YIELD' - an online platform to buy and sell bonds as well as debentures in the secondary market. By offering competitive rates and technical know-how, YIELD would empower the investors to make the right investment decision. The trades and settlement of transactions executed will be reported on the BSE NDS (new debt segment) platform.
- "YIELD is the first-of-its-kind initiative that allows retail investors direct access to the debt instruments," the brokerage house said in a statement.
- This new tool will remove the hassle of filling up physical forms or the need for separate KYC with the bond institutions, it added.
- To facilitate transactions only insecure options, it aggregates only 'AAA' to 'A' rated quality debt instruments available for investment in the secondary market.

Kotak Mahindra Bank tie-up with Indian army to handle salary accounts

- Private sector lender Kotak Mahindra Bank will handle the salary account of the Indian army personnel. The bank has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Indian Army here for a salary account. The MoU enables Kotak to offer its salary account proposition, combined with exclusive benefits for the Indian Army, to all army personnel – both active and retired.
- Through the Kotak salary account, all personnel of the Indian army will get access to the full range of Kotak's products and services including a zero-balance salary account that earns up to 4 per cent interest per annum with free unlimited ATM transactions on all VISA ATMs and anywhere banking across the bank's network of 1,603 branches and 2,573 ATMs across India.
- The salary account will cover other benefits such as a bespoke salary account for the army

personnel, enhanced complimentary personal accident insurance cover – for both on-duty and off-duty incidents.

- It covers accidental death for total or partial permanent disability. It will also offer special education benefit for children and additional girl child benefit by covering dependent children of up to 22 years in the event of an accident claim by the salary account holder.
- Among others, the account will also offer exclusive benefits on loans and credit cards by way of attractive rates and zero processing fees on personal, home and car loans and waiver on joining fees on credit cards.
- Zero-balance; family banking accounts, free online payment transactions, unlimited cheque books, best-in-class rates for dematerialised accounts (Demat) and best-in-class brokerage rates on trading accounts are the other benefits.

HDFC ERGO launches Business Kisht Suraksha cover

- HDFC ERGO General Insurance has launched the “Business Kisht Suraksha” cover. It is a unique cover that was launched with the aim of protecting the balance sheet of Microfinance Institutions (MFIs), financial institutions and banks if any catastrophe or a natural disaster occurs.
- This was launched with the aim of limiting the impacts on the balance sheet of financial institutions which occurs because of non-payment of EMIs by borrowers or because of several calamities like earthquakes, floods, cyclones.
- The Business Kisht can be customised as per the needs of the individual MFI or financial institution (FI). It can also be tailor-made based on the geographical presence of the borrower, MFI or any FIs.
- The MFIs or FIs would also be given the option to select the number of EMIs which might need insurance coverage.